

Oral History Cover Sheet
Name: Joanne Meadows
Date of Interview: August 5, 2005
Location of Interview: Unknown
Interviewer: Dorothe Norton

Approximate years worked for Fish and Wildlife Service: 10+

Offices and Field Stations Worked: Bureau of Sports Fisheries and Wildlife

Positions Held: Secretary

Most Important Projects: Helped organize various administrative workshops

Colleagues and Mentors: Leonard Springer, Bill Aultfather, Wes James, Larry Sisk, Bill Anderson

Most Important Issues: None

Brief Summary of Interview: Born in Noonan, North Dakota on July 12, 1941. Joanne Meadows lived on a farm, went to grade school in Morrison and high school in Columbus graduating in 1959. Taking courses in Minot Business College she graduated and receiving her certificate applied as a secretary for her first government job at the **Minot** Air Force Base. Working there she married and had two kids, then applied to The Bureau of Sports Fisheries and Wildlife working as a secretary from 1966 until she retired in 1970. To return in 1983 to Federal Aid then moving to Ecological Services helping organize various Administrative Workshops until retirement.

National Heritage Team of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Oral History Program

Subject/USFW Retiree: Joanne Meadows

Date: August 5, 2005

Interviewed by: Dorothe Norton

Dorothe Norton:

Today is Friday, August 5, 2005. This interview will be with Joanne Meadows and Dorothe Norton. Okay, so Joanne the first thing that I want to know is your birthplace and the date.

Joanne Meadows:

I was born in Noonan, North Dakota on July 12, 1941.

Dorothe Norton:

What were your parent's names?

Joanne Meadows:

Coyer and Joseph Dalebout.

Dorothe Norton:

What were their jobs and their educations?

Joanne Meadows:

My mother originally was a schoolteacher for a few years, then she married my father and they lived on a farm all their life.

Dorothe Norton:

Where did you spend your early years then, in Noonan?

Joanne Meadows:

No, in the next town over, which was Columbus, and we lived on a farm. I went to grade school in Morrison and high school in Columbus. I then moved from Columbus after I graduated, to Minot.

Dorothe Norton:

Wow, you traveled around! Okay, so how did you spend your early years, what did you do? Did you have any hobbies or special events that you liked?

Joanne Meadows:

When I was a kid we lived on a farm, we made mud pies and, I don't know, just more creative things. We really didn't have television until later years, so we didn't have that. We had a couple of old horses on the farm, and we would try to ride them. I read a lot, listened to the radio. In high school I was in the bands, so I was in a lot of band activities and different associations connected with schools. So that kept me busy.

Dorothe Norton:
What did you play?

Joanne Meadows:
The clarinet; do you remember Artie Shaw and Benny Goodman?

Dorothe Norton:
Yes.

Joanne Meadows:
I sounded just like them.

Dorothe Norton:
Well that's good! Did you ever have a job as a child before you got out of high school?

Joanne Meadows:
Since I was the oldest in my family I had to work for my dad a lot, doing chores like shoveling grain and hauling hay.

Dorothe Norton:
Oh wow, that's good. Did you ever hunt or fish?

Joanne Meadows:
In North Dakota we don't have any fish, or there weren't any back then. And my dad was never into hunting, so I never got into hunting.

Dorothe Norton:
What high school did you go to?

Joanne Meadows:
Columbus, North Dakota.

Dorothe Norton:
What year did you graduate?

Joanne Meadows:
In 1959.

Dorothe Norton:
Did you go onto the university?

Joanne Meadows:
No, I decided to get rich quicker, so I took a course that was through Minot Business College, and I believe it was about an 18 month course. And then after I graduated from

there, or got my little certificate, I went to work for my first government job at the **Minot** Air Force Base.

Dorothe Norton:
So you never did go to college then?

Joanne Meadows:
No, not your true four year college, it was called business college.

Dorothe Norton:
Before you started at the Air Force Base?

Joanne Meadows:
Yes.

Dorothe Norton:
Right after you graduated then, for two years?

Joanne Meadows:
I believe it was a year and a half.

Dorothe Norton:
Were you ever in the military service?

Joanne Meadows:
No.

Dorothe Norton:
But I see you were married at one time, so can you tell me how, and where, and when you met your husband?

Joanne Meadows:
I met an Air Force sergeant at the Minot Air Force Base while I was working there, and we ended up getting married. We got married in 1963.

Dorothe Norton:
In Minot?

Joanne Meadows:
Yes.

Dorothe Norton:
Do you have children?

Joanne Meadows:
I have two children, a son and a daughter.

Dorothe Norton:
And their names and their educations?

Joanne Meadows:
My son's name is Greg, and he went to the University of Minnesota and graduated. My daughter, Robin, graduated from the Columbus College of Art and Design in Columbus, Ohio.

Dorothe Norton:
Oh, in Columbus, Ohio! And what are they doing now?

Joanne Meadows:
My son works with American Express in Minneapolis, and my daughter is working in graphics at the University of Minnesota.

Dorothe Norton:
Very good, okay. That takes care of the personal questions that I have for you. Now, when you were working for the Air Force, did you ever feel that you wanted to work for the Fish and Wildlife Service?

Joanne Meadows:
Back then I'd never heard of Fish and Wildlife Service.

Dorothe Norton:
Where did you go then after you had been working for the Air Force Base there in Minot?

Joanne Meadows:
We moved to Duluth for a short stint until my husband got out of the Air Force, we moved back to Minot and then I resumed working with the military. And then a couple of years later we moved to Minneapolis so that my husband could pursue a career in something, so he ended up going to the university.

Dorothe Norton:
You didn't work then for a few years?

Joanne Meadows:
While he was going to the "U" then I did start my first job, or first job in Minneapolis with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Well, back then it was called the Bureau of...

Dorothe Norton:
Sport Fisheries and Wildlife.

Joanne Meadows:
Right, on Lake Street.

Dorothe Norton:
When did you start?

Joanne Meadows:
I started there in 1966, and quit in 1970.

Dorothe Norton:
And you started then as a clerk typist?

Joanne Meadows:
Yes, I believe it was clerk typist or secretary, one or the other, I think I was about a GS-4.

Dorothe Norton:
And so then when you left there where did you go?

Joanne Meadows:
Then in 1970 I retired, and we moved to the north side of town and I took care of the family and had babies.

Dorothe Norton:
And so then did you come back to work for the Fish and Wildlife Service?

Joanne Meadows:
Then in 1983 I came back to Fish and Wildlife after the kids were grown somewhat. I decided that I needed a job because I was going to get a divorce.

Dorothe Norton:
Oh, okay, but you did come back to the Fish and Wildlife Service?

Joanne Meadows:
Yes.

Dorothe Norton:
And what grade and position were you in then?

Joanne Meadows:
I believe I came back as a GS-4 for a little while, and then shortly after that I got a GS-5.

Dorothe Norton:
What division were you with then?

Joanne Meadows:
I started a temporary for a few weeks in Federal Aid, and then I went over to Ecological Services.

Dorothe Norton:

What attracted you to the Fish and Wildlife Service?

Joanne Meadows:

It was the closest... Well, I don't know, there wasn't an attraction. It was that at the time I had my resumes out, the Buzza Building on Lake Street was the closest government agency nearest the apartment we lived in. And I guess I was fortunate, they hired me, and they were the first and only government office I went to with my resume.

Dorothe Norton:

What did you think the pay and benefits were like?

Joanne Meadows:

Well, back then they all were pretty good, and I guess I knew that from prior experience back in the '60's that the benefits were good.

Dorothe Norton:

Did you have promotion opportunities?

Joanne Meadows:

Yes, through the years I did.

Dorothe Norton:

So you went then from starting as a 4 and then went to a 5?

Joanne Meadows:

And then a 6, then a 7, then a 9, 11, and a 12.

Dorothe Norton:

So when you retired you were a GS-12?

Joanne Meadows:

Yes.

Dorothe Norton:

Okay, and that's why you left the Service, because you were eligible to retire?

Joanne Meadows:

Right.

Dorothe Norton:

While you working with Fish and Wildlife did your career affect your family at all?

Joanne Meadows:

No, it didn't affect it. I was providing support for my daughter, so I needed a job, and at the time my son was on his own. I just needed a job to survive.

Dorothe Norton:

What kind of training did you receive for your jobs once you came to Fish and Wildlife?

Joanne Meadows:

Usually on the job training, or, once in a while I would take a little one day or three day course on something or other to help with the job I was in.

Dorothe Norton:

What hours did you work?

Joanne Meadows:

Usually 7:30 until 4:00, in later years I worked 6:45 until 3:15.

Dorothe Norton:

What were your day-to-day duties?

Joanne Meadows:

A jack of all trades I guess, but always in administrative... Well, starting out in clerical, then administrative. That's a wide range of things, from counting beans to personnel actions and everything else to keep an office going.

Dorothe Norton:

And so you never worked with any animals or heard anything, even though you saw them on paper?

Joanne Meadows:

No, I didn't.

Dorothe Norton:

How do you think the people outside Fish and Wildlife saw Fish and Wildlife Service as an agency? Did a lot of them never hear of it, or did any of them ever say, "Wow!" or "What is it?"

Joanne Meadows:

I think still a lot of people confuse Fish and Wildlife with the DNR. And, of course, there are always a lot of people that are anti-government; it doesn't matter if you are federal or state. And then there are others that do, I guess, that I've run into, do think that we do do things that are beneficial for the conservation of the wildlife. So you have all different walks of life.

Dorothe Norton:

What projects were you ever involved in?

Joanne Meadows:

Helping to organize administrative workshops, I worked on several of those committees. I can't think of anything else right offhand here.

Dorothe Norton:

Were there ever any major issues that you had to deal with?

Joanne Meadows:

No, I can't believe anything that would set the world on fire!

Dorothe Norton:

Who were your supervisors? Like when you started, who was your supervisor?

Joanne Meadows:

With Fish and Wildlife it was, I can't remember who was in Federal Aid, I was only... Oh, when I started Federal Aid back in the '60's, it was **Leonard Springer**. And then after I came back in '83, I worked in Federal Aid only for a few weeks, then I went to ES. And at that time Bill Aultfather was the supervisor. And then later I worked with **Wes James**, he was my supervisor, and then Larry Sisk was my supervisor. And then near the end it was Bill Anderson in Finance Office.

Dorothe Norton:

Who were some of the individuals you feel helped shape your career with Fish and Wildlife Service?

Joanne Meadows:

I guess I learned a lot from **Bev Levine** working in ES. And I guess that's the only one I can think of offhand.

Dorothe Norton:

Who are some of the people that you knew outside Fish and Wildlife? And did you think they would have been able to work for the Service too? Like neighbors or people in your church.

Joanne Meadows:

I can't respond to that, I don't have any answer.

Dorothe Norton:

Okay. Who was president when you were working, or secretary of interior or Director of Fish and Wildlife?

Joanne Meadows:

I don't recall. Back in the '80s, being a lowly little grade, I wasn't thinking about all the political people. I guess that I was trying to survive, so I don't recall who it was back then.

Dorothe Norton:

You said that you started in '60-something over at the Buzza Building?

Joanne Meadows:
I started in 1966.

Dorothe Norton:
Yes, how about **Bob Brewerhall**?

Joanne Meadows:
Yes, he was the RD at the time.

Dorothe Norton:
Did you have a lot of respect for his position or feel that he was a good RD?

Joanne Meadows:
Well, like I say, starting with a new agency at that time, or I was new to the agency, and being a lowly little GS-4 or whatever, I didn't pay too much attention to the politics. I believe, if I remember correctly, everybody did have respect for him.

Dorothe Norton:
And of course you came back in '81.

Joanne Meadows:
In 1983.

Dorothe Norton:
Okay, so Harvey Nelson.

Joanne Meadows:
Yes, he was there then.

Dorothe Norton:
And then Jim.

Joanne Meadows:
Jim, yes.

Dorothe Norton:
And then Sam Marler and then Bill Hartwig.

Joanne Meadows:
Right.

Dorothe Norton:
Those were the ones you worked under?

Joanne Meadows:

Yes.

Dorothe Norton:

Do you think the changes in the administrations affected the work that we were doing?

Joanne Meadows:

I guess I could see a difference from republican to democrat. Of course, we all know republicans are big business and democrats are more for the little guy and the environment. And so you can see some of that. And in recent years a lot of the money has probably not been giving to conservation groups, because it's been needed for more important issues like our security and fighting the wars.

Dorothe Norton:

In your opinion, who are some of the individuals you think who shaped the Service to what it has become today?

Joanne Meadows:

I don't think that I can answer that. I know Teddy Roosevelt, I guess, was kind of the beginning that started Fish and Wildlife, or whatever it was called years ago, Conservation Department, whatever.

Dorothe Norton:

I think it was Biological Survey... Sport Fisheries.

Joanne Meadows:

Oh was it. I guess that I can't answer that.

Dorothe Norton:

What was the high point of your career with Fish and Wildlife?

Joanne Meadows:

Oh, I don't think I really had any one. I enjoyed meeting a lot of friends and the work I did, I enjoyed that.

Dorothe Norton:

How about a low point, did you ever have a low point?

Joanne Meadows:

I had one, but I don't think I want to mention it.

Dorothe Norton:

You don't think you had a low point?

Joanne Meadows:

Yeah I did, but I came out of it. When they reassigned me over to Budget and Finance under ABA I didn't appreciate it, but I grew to like it all and accepted it.

Dorothe Norton:

Did you ever experience a dangerous or frightening situation?

Joanne Meadows:

No.

Dorothe Norton:

Well, I bet this one you can talk about though; what was your most humorous experience working with Fish and Wildlife?

Joanne Meadows:

Oh...

Dorothe Norton:

Too many?

Joanne Meadows:

Yeah, probably, although not any one jumps out at me.

Dorothe Norton:

Well, what do you like to tell others about your career with the Fish and Wildlife Service? Like people you meet and they say, "Where did you work when you working?" Things like that.

Joanne Meadows:

Well, I tell them I used to work for the federal government. Although I don't like to tell people that because so many people have a negative connotation of a person working for the government. And then when I do mention Fish and Wildlife, they all assume it's with the state. So, to tell you the truth, I guess I didn't talk about Fish and Wildlife much with outsiders.

Dorothe Norton:

Okay. What were some of the changes that you observed in the Fish and Wildlife from when you started to when you finished, as far as the management and the workload and that type of thing?

Joanne Meadows:

I think as years went by workload seemed to increase because staff was lessened. As far as management, I think it seemed like years ago you knew how the organization was run

because the RD would... You would know what his thinking was. Nowadays it seems like no one wants to make a determination or rock anybody's boat, and it seems like a ship without a captain in many aspects. And I guess there's the philosophy nowadays that a manager can be a manager, even though he or she does not know the subject matter. As long as they're a manager, people feel that they can manage anything.

Dorothe Norton:

Any changes in the personnel?

Joanne Meadows:

As years go by we lose more and more due to retirement, and it seemed to me like there were less younger people coming to Fish and Wildlife in the regional office in Minneapolis.

Dorothe Norton:

Anything like changes in the environment in the office?

Joanne Meadows:

Not that I can think of.

Dorothe Norton:

What are your thoughts on the future, like where do you see the Service heading in the next decade?

Joanne Meadows:

I guess I would be surprised if it's still here. I think the politicians are out to consolidate, I don't know, just cut down on government in general.

Dorothe Norton:

Okay. Do you have anything you'd like to donate to the archives, or documents to share or pictures or anything?

Joanne Meadows:

No, I don't.

Dorothe Norton:

Okay. Now who else do you think we should interview? Anybody you can think of that maybe I haven't thought of, or I don't have on my list?

Joanne Meadows:

No, I think the ones I can think of you mentioned that you've tried contacting them, I can't think of anybody new.

Dorothe Norton:

Okay. Well, see how simple this was Joanne? Now we've come to the end of the interview, but I want to thank you for the time that you took to do this for me.

KEY WORDS: Joanne Meadows, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, Federal Aid, Ecological Services, Buzza Building, Leonard Springer, Bill Aultfather, Wes James, Larry Sisk, Bill Anderson, Bev Levine, Harvey Nelson, Sam Marler, Bill Hartwig, Theodore Roosevelt, Conservation Department, Biological Survey, Budget and Finance,